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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: ANBAR PROVINCE SECURITY UPDATE

Classified By: Anbar PRT Leader Jim Soriano for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[11](#). (U) This is a PRT Anbar reporting cable. MNF-West leadership has commented on it.

[12](#). (C) Summary. There were 421 security incidents throughout Anbar Province in August, marking the eighth consecutive monthly decline. The improvement around Ramadi is more dramatic than in the province as a whole, with security incidents currently averaging less than one a day. A battlefield six months ago, Ramadi is no longer under insurgent control. Four factors contributed to this situation: public opinion turned against Al-Qaeda, tribal leaders aligned with us, police recruitment increased, and joint Coalition-Iraqi security operations proved effective. As a result, the provincial and municipal governments are reconstituting themselves. Six months ago, local government was in disarray. Today, virtually every city and town in the province has a mayor and functioning local council. The missing piece in our counter-insurgency strategy is the spotty and erratic financial support from the ministries in Baghdad, but even that piece is slowly falling into place. The improved security has stimulated an early round of political jockeying among tribal leaders and other provincial players. End Summary.

[13](#). (SBU) Security incidents in Anbar Province in August continued a general downward trend that began last fall. According to MNF-West records, there were 421 incidents, about 14 a day, in the province last month, the eighth consecutive month of decline. The tally compares to the 1,700 to 1,900 security incidents typically seen on a monthly basis last summer and fall. The high point was last September when MNF-West recorded 1,981 security incidents province-wide.

[14](#). (SBU) The security improvement around Ramadi, the provincial capital, has been even more dramatic. There were only 27 incidents recorded in the Ramadi area in August, an historic low, compared to the 924 incidents in July 2006, the historic high. Since June 1, the Ramadi area has experienced at least 32 days in which there have been no security incidents at all. A battlefield six months ago, Ramadi is no longer under insurgent control.

[15](#). (C) To be sure, Anbar is not out of the woods yet. Much of the battle has shifted to the eastern part of the province near Fallujah, in an arc running from north of the city to areas to its east and south. In general, Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) has been pushed from major population centers and into the rural areas. Nonetheless, the enemy is not giving up easily, as seen in fighting north east of Fallujah in late August, and in AQI's attempt to re-infiltrate into Ramadi in June (see the account of the fighting near Donkey Island in "The Washington Post," August 19).

Factors At Work

¶6. (SBU) The improvement in Anbar's security may be attributed to several factors, each of which tends to reinforce the others. The most prominent of these include the following:

- Public opinion turned against the enemy. Al-Qaeda badly miscalculated in using murder and intimidation to deter local residents from cooperating with the Coalition Forces (CF) and the Iraqi security forces (ISF). Virtually all segments of society, from children to grey-haired tribal leaders, have been AQI victims. Nor has AQI's extremist ideology resonated with the public. The mosques are an indicator. Eyewitnesses say that calls to insurrection typically spewed forth from Anbari mosques in 2003-04, but radical preachers were pushed aside and more moderate voices regained control. Today it is unusual to hear a mosque sermon that is hostile to the CF.

- The tribes mobilized. AQI's murder and intimidation campaign kept many tribal leaders sitting on the fence, unable to cooperate with the CF. The tipping point came in September 2006 when a group of Ramadi-based tribal sheikhs, under the leadership of Sheikh Sattar Abu Risha (see below), formed the Anbar Salvation Council (ASC). That group quickly became the symbol of the anti-AQI resistance. It encouraged local youths to join the police force and it raised three "emergency police battalions" to patrol Ramadi streets. Tribes in other parts of the province imitated the ASC, but did not necessarily align with it. Today virtually all of the province's tribal leaders have moved to our side and are working to restore order.

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- Police recruitment. Last summer there were fewer than 4,000 police on the province's rolls, and only a few dozen applicants responded to police recruitment drives. Today there are 21,000 police and more recruits than places at the police academy to train them. The Ministry of Interior has approved five "emergency police battalions" in Anbar, whose rank-and-file will ultimately be integrated into the regular police force. The key point is that the police are recruited locally, unlike the Iraqi Army, whose recruits come from other provinces. This local base gives the counter-insurgent the home-field advantage against AQI. The rapid expansion of Anbar's police may be the decisive action that turned Anbar's security around.

- Effective CF and ISF operations. The turn of public opinion, tribal mobilization, and police recruitment did not happen in a vacuum. These developments happened because of the sacrifices of MNF-West Marines, soldiers, and sailors, who created the conditions for the Anbaris to take back their cities. They happened because of years of patient engagement with tribal leaders by local MNF-West commanders. In Ramadi, the CF and ISF systematically cleared one neighborhood after another, and backfilled those areas with combat outposts, often jointly manned by the CF and ISF, and Iraqi police stations. These positions reassure local residents and hinder AQI's freedom of movement. Even as local security forces expanded in the past year, they were under constant pressure from AQI. They have performed well, staying on the job even after taking casualties. Today their key vulnerability is the erratic financial and logistical support from the central government.

Reconnecting government

¶7. (SBU) If the four preceding factors are contributing causes for Anbar's improved security, the immediate effect would be the re-establishment of local government. Last

winter Anbar's provincial and municipal governments were non-existent or in disarray. The Provincial Council had fled Ramadi for the relative safety of Baghdad in March 2006 amid insurgent violence. Civil servants went underground. Little if any GOI funds flowed into the province. Today that situation has turned around. The Provincial Council has returned to its seat of power in Ramadi, civil servants are back on the job, and virtually every city and town has a mayor and functioning municipal council.

18. (C) In this sense, the battle against AQI turns on which side can most efficiently administer the population. During the insurgency, government administration was crippled and in key instances ceased to function. Today, AQI is on the outside of the cities looking in. The counter-insurgent holds the initiative on local administration. The missing piece, however, is the still spotty and erratic support coming from central government ministries. But even that piece is gradually falling into place. Today, GOI Cabinet ministers and provincial officials are regularly discussing ways to meet Anbar's needs for economic recovery.

Political Jockeying

19. (C) Anbar Province is emerging from a violent insurgency into the post-conflict period. It is in a messy and precarious transition period, but some of the key political actors are as follows:

- The Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP). Anbaris cast only 3,775 ballots, in population of 1.2 million, in the January 2005 provincial council election. The IIP won some 2,700 votes and the right to form the Council. It is on that shaky foundation that the Council's legitimacy rests today. Nonetheless, the province's IIP leaders are pragmatic and have filled Council vacancies, and even increased the Council membership, to accommodate its critics and to broaden council representation by adding tribal sheikhs. Since last spring, the IIP has been in talks with Sheikh Sattar's "Iraq Awakening Movement" (SAI), a vocal critic of the IIP. The purpose is to create unity among Anbar's tribes and political factions, and to present a united Sunni face to the central government.

- The Iraq Awakening. Sattar rose to prominence last September when he formed the Anbar Salvation Council (ASC), a grassroots reaction to Al-Qaeda's murder and intimidation campaign. In April, he formed the SAI, a move seen as a bid to compete with the IIP in future elections. Sattar

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maintains that the SAI is non-sectarian, but sees it as the home for Sunni aspirations. To date, the SAI as a political movement does not appear to have much traction either within the province or without. Sattar himself is openly pro-Coalition, has made overtures to Shia Muslims, and is contemptuous of Islamist politicians. After the August 1 Tawafuq walkout of the Cabinet, PM Maliki approached him to help fill the vacancies. So far Sattar has declined the offer and is proceeding cautiously.

- Sheikh Hamid Al-Heiss Al-Thiyabi and Sheikh Ali Hatem Al-Assafi. Heiss is one of the co-founders with Sattar of the ASC, but the two have had a falling out, ostensibly caused by Heiss' acceptance of PM Maliki's overtures to join the government. Heiss has told the Iraqi press that he is ready to name candidates to fill Cabinet vacancies for PM Maliki's consideration. Meanwhile, Heiss appears to be moving in concert with Sheikh Ali Hatem Al-Assafi, the thirtysomething heir to Anbar's large Duleimi tribal confederation and a powerful challenger to Sattar. Both Heiss and Ali Hatem have reportedly been talking with the

PM about the Cabinet. The two seem to be unlikely bedfellows. Heiss, like Sattar, is openly pro-Coalition, whereas Ali Hatem, playing to the nationalist resistance, has made threatening comments in the press about the Coalition's presence in Anbar.

¶10. (C) These political maneuverings are taking place because AQI is on the defensive. Anbaris are increasingly turning towards the post-conflict period. Today there is a mood in the public of rising expectations for economic recovery, jobs, and responsive local government. Those expectations themselves are evidence that public opinion in western Iraq, which was noted for its feelings of estrangement from the national political scene several years ago, has shifted to a more pragmatic approach with respect to the Coalition and to Baghdad.
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